



come to *EASTER!*

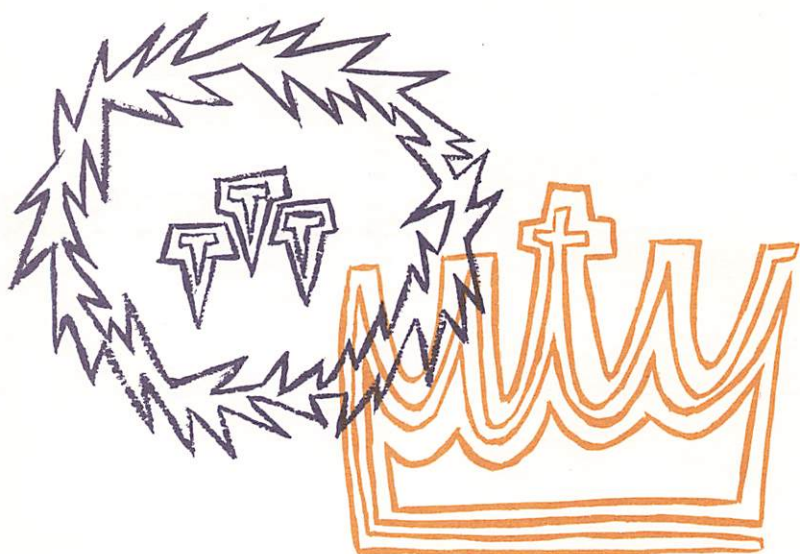


*a family Lenten-Easter book of worship, activities, and customs*

ANNA LAURA and EDWARD GEBHARD

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OF THEOLOGY  
CLAREMONT, CALIF.

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**ANNA LAURA and EDWARD GEBHARD**

Illustrations by Jean Penland

Theology Library  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
AT CLAREMONT  
California

COME TO EASTER!

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It's true, we cannot reach Christ's forti'th day;  
Yet to go part of that religious way,  
Is better than to rest:  
We cannot reach our Saviour's puritie;  
Yet we are bid, *Be holy e'en as he.*  
In both, let's do our best.

Who goeth in the way that Christ hath gone  
Is much more sure to meet with him, than one  
That travelleth by-ways:  
Perhaps my God, though he be farre before,  
May turn, and take me by the hand, and more  
May strengthen my decays.

—From "Lent"  
George Herbert (1593-1633)





## *I* **LENT: SPRINGTIME OF THE SPIRIT**

WHEN LATE JANUARY AND EARLY FEBRUARY ROLL AROUND, does the little child at your house stand at the window, his face pressed against the pane, and, as he looks out at the drab outdoors, ask, "Why does it get dark so soon?" or, "Isn't it ever going to get warm again?"

If he does, you probably answer, "Spring will soon be here, and then the sun will stay up longer and warm up the earth."

Springtime! That's what the old English word, *Lent*—or the still older Anglo-Saxon word, *lencten*—really means. The winter days lengthen, the cold winds abate, the tight-wrapped buds swell, the seeds burst their brown jackets and send out their rootlets. Spring is coming!

And for centuries Lent in the Christian church has meant springtime of the spirit. It is a time in early spring to prepare and to sow the seeds of the spiritual life and to remember Jesus. It is the time to recall the growing Christ: the commission he received from the Holy Spirit at his baptism; the forty days of testing and prayer he spent in the wilder-



ness; the authority and power of his teachings; the comfort and strength of his healing touch; the steadfastness of his dedication to God's way; the lonely, courageous steps to the Cross; and finally the glory of the resurrection morning. Easter!

And because we walk in memory with him during the days of Lent, the joy of the resurrection morn is available to us on Easter. We make the discovery that through death comes life eternal, that God can use a cross on which to reveal his love, that the goodness and truth that Jesus lived triumphs over the cruel, cross-crowned hill, and that the indwelling presence of Christ is available to us everyday.

Come, then, to Easter by the path the Master trod!

### Scripture for Family Reading

It takes a long time to get ready for Easter! Do you wonder why? When you're expecting a special guest to visit in your home, you know how much getting ready there is to do—the house to clean, special foods to prepare, family planning, and talking to make the guest's stay as pleasant as possible!

Something like that happens during the days before Easter. We want to get ready for Jesus. On Easter we discover anew that he is alive—that his Spirit lives in our homes—if we are ready for him. During Lent we want to get ready, inside and out, to welcome him into our lives.

The readings from the Bible this week help us find some of the ways we can prepare for feeling his presence. Some of our getting ready can be done by each one of us by ourselves. Some of it can be done by our working together as a family.

We may use these readings, songs, poems, prayers, activities, and Bible verses as a guide to help us prepare for Jesus.

Ash Wednesday: Search Me, O God Ps. 139:1-12, 23-24

Thursday: What the Lord Requires Mic. 6:8

Friday: The Inner Law Jer. 31:31-34

Saturday: Forty Days of Fasting Mark 1:9-13

Sunday: "When Ye Fast" Matt. 6:16-18

## What We Can Do for Lent

Lent is, first of all, *a time to remember Jesus*. Coming to Easter by way of roads which Jesus walked in Galilee and by his steps to the Cross, will make Easter day glow with a meaning we cannot experience on "by-ways." In our families, let us *practice holy habits*.

1. *Study and worship together in church*. Even though the weather may be blustery, let the whole family attend church and Sunday church school regularly and together.

2. Set aside a time each day for *family worship*. Follow together from the Scriptures the road that Jesus walked to Easter. Join together in hymns, prayers, stories, and readings that tell about Jesus.

3. Choose to do *something special for Lent*. In one family the seven- and nine-year-old sisters usually set the supper table. They are delighted when occasionally their father brings home a friend, an unexpected guest, for supper. During Lent the family decided to set an extra place at the table every meal for their "unseen guest." On the plate of the guest the mother put the price of the meal for one person. Often the family talked about who their guest might be: a hungry child from Hong Kong, the Indian boy from the reservation who seldom had milk to drink, the African student at a Congo mission school who had little food to eat.

Another family gives up its usual desserts during Lent so that the cost of their extras may be used to help those who are hungry. The Lenten offerings in our churches often give us a way to share our plenty with those in need.

Or choose some special act of Christian service—something you decide to do as a family to help you remember Jesus. Do you have an aged neighbor or friend who would appreciate a ride to church? Do you

know someone who is far away from home who would enjoy the friendliness of your family circle? In the family talk over what each person can do that will help him remember Jesus' life of loving service.

### *Look for Springtime Surprises*

Can you find the first signs of spring? Some families make a treasure hunt of tracking down springtime surprises early in Lent. Perhaps your first surprises will be the gushing streams and waterfalls from the melting snowbanks; perhaps the yellowing willow thickets; maybe the first pussy willows (if you take a few twigs home, be sure to put them in water so their furry backs will blossom into ragged yellow "flowers"); or maybe you will pick the first furry-petalled pasque flowers (passion flowers, because they bloom during Lent!) on the edge of a snow bank. Or maybe you will see a robin or hear a blackbird's throaty call. (You can attract the migrating birds as well as winter residents to your own backyard with a basket made of chicken netting wire and filled with suet from the market.) One family keeps a chart on the kitchen bulletin board headed, "Signs of Spring," and lists all the fresh discoveries. The nursery members of a family can draw pictures of their finds. If you have a favorite place to go to look for springtime surprises, the children will enjoy returning to the same spot as the spring days pass and watching the changes that take place.

### *Grow a Garden in a Bowl*

The first week of Lent is just the right time to plant an indoor garden in a bowl if you want blooming narcissus or hyacinths as an Easter centerpiece. And what a happy Easter surprise a bowl of blooming flowers is for an older friend, relative, or shut-in!

In a flat bowl, put a cluster of paper-white narcissus bulbs, and then add a cupful of white sand or colored stones (you can get them from the shop when you buy your bulbs). Fill the bowl with water to the level of the stones. Then set the bowl in a dark place till white rootlets begin to grow (about two weeks). Now you will need a sunny window and regular watering to bring the flowers hidden in the bulbs to blossom.

## Ancient Customs That Live Today

### *Shrovetide*

"Let's have a good time first!" Have you ever said or thought these words to yourself when you faced a time of testing, trial, or change? In the old days Lent often meant wearing dark, drab clothing, eating meals without meat, and banning all good times for the forty days of Lent. And so it became a custom for people to have a time of jolly fun before Lent began. The three or four days before Lent, Shrovetide, was a time of gay celebration, of carnival and revelry, of costume parades and merrymaking, of tricks and funpoking. The gay Mardi Gras, kept in some of our southern cities, is a relic from the day when many people said, "Let's have a good time, a hilariously funny time, a celebration, before Lent begins."

### *Pancake Day*

Shrove Tuesday, or the day before Lent begins, is still called Pancake Day in some places. On this day the special menu in most homes is pancakes and sausages, bacon, or other scraps of meat served with good things to eat (and so the day is called Guddins Day in some places!). Frying pancakes for her family gave the housewife a chance to use up leftover lard and meat scraps before the fasts of Lent began, when meat and grease were not used for cooking. For hundreds of years Christians have eaten pancakes on Shrove Tuesday to remind them of the little flat wheaten cakes used by the early Christians. "Let's have pancakes for supper!"

### *Forty Days of Lent*

The first Lent that the church kept lasted forty hours—as a reminder of the dark hours that the body of Jesus lay in the tomb, some say. Then the period of memory was extended to the thirty-six days preceding the Easter dawn. Finally, in the sixth century, Gregory the Great decided that Lent should be a forty-day period (excepting Sundays) of fasting, penitence, and prayer.

Why forty days? Some say one day of remembrance is kept for each



hour that Jesus lay in the tomb; some say that each day is a reminder of each year that the Israelites wandered in the wilderness; some that the forty days commemorate the forty-day fasts of prophets like Moses and Elijah; and finally, others say the forty days help us to remember the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness following his baptism preparing himself spiritually for his own "coming to Easter."

### *Penitence, Fasting, and Prayer*

These words seem to belong to Lent. They are as old as the Bible. Whenever people have wanted to do what is pleasing to God, they have felt sorry for their mistakes and wrongdoings—penitent. They have looked for ways to show God how truly sorry they are. Giving up the eating of certain foods or not eating at all at certain times—fasting—is a way that some have chosen. Finally, they have spent time in prayer in order to understand what God wants them to be or to do.

Each person who tries to live as Jesus lived sees his own failings, his personal shortcomings, his sins. Lent is a time to say, "Father, forgive me. Help me live as Jesus wants me to."

### *Ash Wednesday*

Ash Wednesday begins the forty days of Lent. From early Old Testament times on, ashes were used as a sign of sorrow, mourning, and penitence. At the beginning of Lent the ancient sign of ashes starts a period of penitence, prayer, and self-denial.

### *Giving Something Up for Lent*

"Giving something up for Lent" has long been a practice during the forty days of Lent. "If I give up something I like or do habitually, it will help me remember Jesus," many people have said. And so, still today, some families give up the eating of certain foods, some children give up buying candy, and others give up certain amusements.

Giving up something for Lent becomes meaningful if what we give up really helps us remember Jesus and live as he would want us to. Doing without candy or cokes so that the money might be used as a special offering to feed or clothe hungry and ill-clothed children, giv-

ing up certain activities which we usually do so we will have time to visit a neighbor who is shut in, or write a letter or show friendliness to someone who is lonely—this kind of giving something up for Lent will help us know Jesus better and love him more.

### *The World Day of Prayer*

A day when the whole world prays is a modern Lenten custom with age-old roots. All around the world on the first Friday of Lent, there are groups of Christians earnestly praying that Christ's will may be done and that his peace may come to all the earth. Even the children and youth in many places have special prayer services and programs.

Seventy-five years ago, a few scattered women's missionary bands in the United States set aside the Day of Prayer. Now in more than 140 nations around the world, hundreds of thousands of Christians keep up a continuous chain of prayer throughout the day. In the United States the World Day of Prayer is sponsored by the United Council of Church Women, and throughout the world the World Council of Churches helps to promote and organize the day. The offerings brought by the worshipers during the day are used to help answer the prayers for peace and good will.

### *Hot Cross Buns*

Hot cross buns, hot cross buns,  
One a penny, two a penny, hot cross buns,  
If you have no daughters, give them to your sons.

The old nursery rhyme reminds us that for generations the spicy frosted buns, marked with a cross, have been the bakers' trademark for Lent. The fruit-filled buns have long provided a welcome variation to the meatless menus of Lent. Long ago mothers got up early on Lenten mornings to make the hot cross buns for their families. Some folk even thought the spicy buns had magical powers. They dried the left-over pieces and kept them to bring good luck, to ward off illness, and to plant with the garden seeds to make the vegetable and fruit seeds



grow. We smile at the superstitions now, yet we still eat hot cross buns during Lent. But we buy them at the bakery!

### *Spring House Cleaning*

Is spring house cleaning traditional in your home? Even the most exacting housewife is probably unaware that when she cleans the cupboards and scrubs the pots and pans, she is keeping an ancient Lenten custom. The scouring of pans (to remove every vestige of meat grease!) before the beginning of the Lenten fasts is a tradition centuries old. The Russian Christians began Lent with Clean Monday. But even before the Christian Era, Jewish housewives cleaned their cupboards and pantries before the Passover to make sure that every crumb of leavened dough was destroyed before the sacred feast began.

Clean Monday reminds Christians how Jesus cleansed the Temple on Monday of Holy Week driving out those who bought and sold that the Temple might once more be "a house of prayer." In some rural churches of Minnesota, the church folk set aside the Monday of Holy Week to "house clean the church," preparing it for the services of Holy Communion and for Easter Sunday.

## **Prayers for the Beginning of Lent**

### *For Purity of Heart*

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### *A Family Prayer for the Beginning of Lent*

Dear Father, we know that spring will soon be here. The days grow longer, the sun is brighter, the cold of winter is lessening. As we see the

signs of spring, we think about the joy that Jesus brought to those who knew him. His life showed us what you are like and how you want us to live with one another. When we think of his friendly, loving ways, his goodness and purity, his willingness to do your will no matter what it cost him, we are sorry about our own unkindnesses and impatience toward each other. Help us feel closer to Jesus during these days as we walk toward Easter remembering him. Amen.

### A Song for the Week

When a band of Hussites in 1620 fled the persecution of the bloody anti-Reformation purge in Bohemia by settling down among the peasant folk of Silesia, they were filled with joy by the first springtime of their exile. The greening fields, the blossoming hillsides, the warm sunshine reminded them of their Lord and Savior for whose sake they had fled into the bountiful countryside. With them they had brought their happy custom of hymn singing. Among their treasured folk songs was this familiar hymn of the Church, "Fairest Lord Jesus." Each spring we sing it, remembering how the loveliest things of nature are ruled by the Son of God and man.

Fairest Lord Jesus,  
Ruler of all nature,  
O thou of God and man the Son,  
Thee will I cherish,  
Thee will I honor,  
Thee, my soul's Glory, Joy, and Crown.

Fair are the meadows,  
Fairer still the woodlands,  
Robed in the blooming garb of spring:  
Jesus is fairer,

Jesus is purer,  
Who makes the woeful heart to sing.

Fair is the sunshine,  
Fairer still the moonlight,  
And all the twinkling starry host:  
Jesus shines brighter,  
Jesus shines purer  
Than all the angels heaven can boast.

—From the German, 17th century

### Books and Music to Enrich Your Lent and Easter

One little booklet cannot contain all the resources that can make your walk to Easter a rich and joyous experience. Of course, the principal resource is the *Bible* itself, the four Gospels especially. For the youth and children of your family, why not explore one of the modern speech translations of the New Testament such as the Revised Standard Version or the New English Bible in your daily readings? And as close as your public library or church school library door you will find other resources, both books and records. Here is a list of some finds. Can you discover them—and others?

### Books About Jesus for Family Reading During Lent

Allstrom, Elizabeth. *Jesus, Friend and Helper*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. Illustrated. Ages 5-8. Seven stories of Jesus as a man retold for primary children.

Battle, Edith Kent. *Boys and Girls Who Knew Jesus*. Chicago: Rand

- McNally & Co. Ages 4-8. Episodes from the life of Jesus seen through the eyes of children who knew him.
- Bowie, Walter Russell. *The Bible Story for Boys and Girls: New Testament*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. Ages 10-12. The story of Jesus and his followers told in the language of boys and girls.
- Brown, Helen. *Jesus Goes to the Synagogue*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. Illustrated. Ages 6-9. How people worshiped in Jesus' day.
- Goddard, Carrie Lou. *Jesus Goes to School*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. Illustrated. Ages 4-6. The story of a day spent with the small boy Jesus at a synagogue school.
- Jones, Mary Alice. *His Name Is Jesus*. Chicago: Rand McNally & Co. Ages 9-14. A biography of Jesus told as a plotted story.
- *Tell Me About the Bible*. Chicago: Rand McNally & Co. Ages 6-9.
- *Tell Me About Jesus*. Chicago: Rand McNally & Co. Ages 8-10.
- *Tell Me About Heaven*. Chicago: Rand McNally & Co. Ages 9-12.
- Smallwood, Kate. *I Think About Jesus*. Chicago: Rand McNally & Co. Ages 2-5. A small child's thoughts about Jesus, in the language of early childhood, showing how Jesus loves all boys and girls.
- Smither, Ethel L. *Stories of Jesus*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. Ages 8-10. Eleven New Testament stories of Jesus—his nativity, his later years as teacher, helper, and friend.
- Tippett, James S. *Jesus Lights the Sabbath Lamp*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. Illustrated. Ages 4-6. A picture story of the small boy Jesus in his humble Nazareth home.

### Books About Easter for Family Enjoyment

- Adams, Charlotte. *Easter Idea Book*. M. Barrows and Co., Inc.
- Harper, W. comp. *Easter Chimes, Stories for Easter and the Spring*



- Season*. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc. A collection of Easter stories for family reading.
- Hays, Wilma Pitchford. *Easter Fires*. New York: Coward-McCann, Inc. A book of Easter poems and stories for family enjoyment.
- Hole, Christina. *Easter and Its Customs*. New York: M. Barrows and Co., Inc. A study of the traditions and customs that have clustered about Easter, written simply enough for family reading.
- Lloyd, Mary Edna. *Glad Easter Day*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. Ages 4-6.
- Milhaus, K. *The Egg Tree*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. Ages 6-9. Story of children in a Pennsylvania community who learn how to decorate eggs and hang them on an egg tree.
- Sechrist, Elizabeth Hough and Janette Woolsey. *It's Time for Easter*. Philadelphia: Macrae Smith Co.

### Books That Have Lenten and Easter Songs

The songs and hymns in *Come to Easter* may be found in your denominational hymnal or one of the following:

- Thomas, Edith Lovell. *Sing Children, Sing*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. ("Fairest Lord Jesus," "Tell Me the Stories of Jesus," "When Jesus Was a Little Boy.")
- *Singing Worship with Boys and Girls*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. ("Fairest Lord Jesus," "Father, Lead Me Day by Day," "O Master of the Loving Heart," "O Happy Home, Where Thou Art Loved," "All Glory, Laud, and Honor.")
- The Hymnal for Youth*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press. ("Were You There When They Crucified My Lord," "The Hidden Years," "Father, Lead Me Day by Day," "Fairest Lord Jesus," "All Glory,

Laud, and Honor," "Come, Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain," "O Happy Home, Where Thou Art Loved.")

### For Family Listening During Lent

Bach: *Easter Oratorio*, Vienna Symphony (Vox 8620)

Dubois: *The Seven Last Words*, New Jersey Oratorio Chorus. (WORD Records W-4002-LP)

Handel: Excerpts from *The Messiah*, New York Philharmonic and Chorus under direction of Leonard Bernstein (Columbia ML 5300)

*Spirituals*, Marian Anderson: Includes such favorites as "Crucifixion," "Let Us Break Bread Together," "Were You There?", "Ride On, King Jesus." (RCA Victor LM-2032)

*The Beloved Choruses*, Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Includes Bach: "Sheep May Safely Graze," "Jesus, Joy of Man's Desiring"; Haydn: "The Heavens Are Telling"; Handel: "The Hallelujah Chorus" from *The Messiah*. (Columbia ML-5364)

*Music of the Methodist Church*, Southern Methodist University Choir (WORD Records W-4018-LP)

*Easter Songs*, Robert Shaw Chorale (RCA Victor LM 1201)

*Growing Days*, Songs for the nursery child, including sacred music played on organ. (Graded Press)

*Sing O Sing*, Kindergarten songs about the church, God's world, and Jesus. (Graded Press)

*Gladly Sing*, Songs for primary children to enrich their Christian experience about God's world, the church, Jesus, the family. (Graded Press)





## II JESUS GROWS UP

Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

—LUKE 2:52

We would see Jesus, Mary's Son most holy,  
Light of the village life from day to day;  
Shining revealed through every task most lowly,  
The Christ of God, the Life, the Truth, the Way.<sup>1</sup>

### Scripture for Family Reading

SOMETIMES THE YEARS OF JESUS' CHILDHOOD AND YOUNG manhood are called "the hidden years" because the gospels tell us little of his Nazareth home or of his growing to manhood there.

And yet, they tell us much. For here Jesus grew as other boys of Hebrew homes. He learned "the first and great commandment": "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul,

<sup>1</sup> By J. Edgar Park, from *New Worship and Song*. The Pilgrim Press.

and with all thy mind." He went to synagogue school and studied his lessons well, for later in his teachings and conversation, he was so familiar with the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings of his people that his speech was full of phrases from them. He learned carpentry from Joseph, and as the eldest child in a large family he must have worked long hours at the carpenter's bench. At sunset he probably often climbed the hill above Nazareth where he could see the caravan roads winding to Jerusalem and on clear days the Mediterranean Sea lying to the west like a distant gem.

At the age of twelve, he went with Mary and Joseph to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. What an experience the trip to the holy city proved to be! For there he realized that he must be about his heavenly Father's work. But he returned to Nazareth, an obedient child with a great purpose.

Later, when he taught the crowds, he used simple family words to make his thinking clear. He called God his Father; all men were brothers, and the power which he believed to be the strongest in all the world was the power he learned about at home: it was love. Father, mother, brother, sister, love—he used these familiar words over one hundred times in his teachings. Surely the hidden years at Nazareth prepared him for his sacred task.

Monday: The First Command Deut. 6:4-9

Tuesday: Hymn from a Hilltop Ps. 8

Wednesday: Hymn on the Way to the Temple Ps. 24

Thursday: The Trip to Jerusalem Luke 2:40-50

Friday: How Jesus Grew Luke 2:51-52

Saturday: His Divine Commission Matt. 3:13-17

Sunday: The Time of His Testing Luke 4:1-13

### Grace Before Meals

Here is a very old Hebrew grace which may have been used in the Nazareth home and which Jesus may have used with his friends:

"Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, king of the world,  
who bringest forth bread from the earth."

Here is a table blessing that some families use today. (It may be sung to the hymn tune, "Canonbury.")

For sun and shower, for soil and seeds,  
For love that fills our daily needs,  
For hands that grow and cook our food,  
We thank Thee, Giver of all good. Amen.<sup>2</sup>

### Prayers for the Week

#### *I Like to Think of Jesus*

(May be used by the family responsively or for personal meditation)

I like to think of Jesus:

Once he was a child, too. He had work to do, as I have. He helped his mother with the daily chores. He worked beside his father in the carpenter shop. I think he did his work well and happily.

I like to think of Jesus:

He, too, played with his friends at happy games. No child was forgotten or treated unfairly when Jesus was there. I think he had a smile for everyone. I would like to have had him for a friend.

I like to think of Jesus:

He went to school as I do. And he learned his lessons well. He was a quick and eager pupil. The other boys must have liked being in his class. I think he knew that someday synagogue school would help him do God's work.

I like to think of Jesus:

He was a big brother to younger brothers and sisters. He obeyed

<sup>2</sup> Anna Laura and Edward W. Gebhard, *Guideposts to Creative Family Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 134.

his father and his mother with a happy spirit. Each day he grew stronger in body and mind, and always I think, he was friendly and kind. I like to think that as he grew, he learned to listen for God's voice and that he did what God wanted him to do.

Dear Father, help me to grow as Jesus grew—strong in body and mind and pleasing with others and thee. Amen.

### *A Boy's Prayer*

Father, lead me day by day  
Ever in Thine own good way;  
Teach me to be pure and true,  
Show me what I ought to do.

When in danger, make me brave,  
Make me know that Thou canst save;  
Keep me safely by Thy side;  
Let me in Thy love abide.

When I'm tempted to do wrong,  
Make me steadfast, wise, and strong;  
And when all alone I stand,  
Shield me with Thy mighty hand.

May I do the good I know,  
Serving gladly here below;  
Then at last go home to Thee,  
Evermore Thine own to be.

—John P. Hopps

When Jesus was a little boy,  
And played beside the street,  
I know that, when his mother called,  
He ran on flying feet.



I know that when he saw a child  
Too small or lame to run,  
That he would stop his own swift feet  
And help that little one.

I think he played at happy games,  
As children do today,  
And that he played them fine and fair,  
For that was Jesus' way.

And often in his father's shop,  
Among the clean bright wood,  
I know he sang and did his work  
The very best he could.<sup>3</sup>

### A Song for the Week

Here are some verses about those years which are not mentioned in the gospel records. We can only guess from his later ministry how Jesus spent these years. Enjoy the verse as a poem or sing it to the hymn tune, "Bethlehem."

The hidden years at Nazareth! How deep and still they seem,  
Like rivers flowing in the dark Or waters in a dream!  
Like waters under Syrian stars Reflecting lights above,  
Repeating in their silent depths The wonders of God's love!

The hidden years at Nazareth! How clear and true they lie,  
As open to the smile of God As to the Syrian sky!  
As open to the heart of man As to the genial sun,  
With dreams of vast adventuring, And deeds of kindness done!

The hidden years at Nazareth! How radiant they rise!  
With life and death in balance laid Before a Lad's clear eyes!

<sup>3</sup> "When Jesus Was a Little Boy" by Grace Noll Crowell. Used by permission of author.

O soul of youth, forever choose, Forgetting fate or fear,  
To live for truth or die with God, Who stands beside thee here! <sup>4</sup>

## What We Can Do This Week

### *Watch Spring Twigs Unfold*

This week why not go for a drive to the woods? Or look at the bushes in your own yard or in the park? Do you find anywhere that the tight winter jackets of the buds on trees and bushes are loosening and the buds are beginning to swell? If the bushes or trees are in your own yard, you will find it interesting to cut a few twigs and bring them into the house where it is warm. Put them in a vase of water and set them in a sunny window. This week watch the young leaves grow green and strong. You may want to put the vase of twigs on your family beauty center, with the Bible open to Matt. 6:30 before them.

Do you know someone who cannot get outdoors to look for the signs of spring? Why not arrange a bouquet of spring twigs for him?

### *Play the Story of Jesus Going to Church*

The road to Jerusalem was long and winding. In some places the path was steep. Then the travelers had to walk very slowly in order not to slip and fall. Part of the way to Jerusalem, Jesus probably sang songs:

"I was glad when they said unto me  
Let us go unto the house of the Lord."

to make the miles pass quickly.

Finally, the travelers saw in the distance the great walls of the city with the Temple towers beyond. They almost ran up the hills to get there, so happy they were.

<sup>4</sup> Allen Eastman Cross, "The Hidden Years at Nazareth!" Used by permission of Mrs. Robert P. Bingham.



Can you play "Going to Jerusalem"? Or maybe your family would like to act out Mary and Joseph's finding him in the Temple with the wise men when they thought he was lost in the city.

### ***Make Stand-Up Table Blessing Cards***

Our table prayers mean most when we think about what we are saying or singing. That is why some families like to vary their table blessings.

A good way to do this is to make stand-up table blessing cards for each place at the table. A half sheet of construction paper is about the right size for a stand-up card. Fold the paper in the center. Now you have four sections (using both sides of the card!) about 4½ by 6 inches. On each section print neatly or type one of your favorite table prayers. (You may use the ones on p. 22.) Be sure to include one your family has written or likes to use. Stand up a table blessing card at each place when you set the table. (Why not let the one who helps to set the table choose the blessing for the meal?)



### III JESUS, THE MASTER TEACHER

When Jesus had finished this discourse, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them like one who had authority and not like their scribes.  
—Matt. 7:28-29 (Goodspeed)

We would see Jesus, on the mountain teaching,  
With all the listening people gathered round;  
While birds and flowers and sky above are preaching,  
The blessedness which simple trust has found.<sup>1</sup>

#### Scripture for Family Reading

WHEREVER JESUS WENT THE PEOPLE FOLLOWED HIM IN ORDER to listen to the good and gracious things he said. Here was a wise man

<sup>1</sup> By J. Edgar Park, from *New Worship and Song*. The Pilgrim Press.

who spoke with such understanding of God and of his people that he didn't just repeat the old complicated rules from the Law; he showed them by his living and teaching what God was really like. He saw the dejected folk in the crowds around him and told them how to be really happy. He looked into the worried faces of fathers and mothers and told them to trust in God their Father, who feeds the birds and makes the flowers beautiful and cares for people even more than for birds and flowers. He told quarreling brothers how to get along with each other. When they said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray," he showed them how by praying.

Monday: Launch Out . . . Follow Me Luke 5:1-11

Tuesday: Happy Are They Matt. 5:1-12

Wednesday: "Ye Have Heard . . . But I Say" Matt. 5:21-26;  
33-48

Thursday: Don't Worry About Tomorrow Matt. 6:24-34

Friday: "Go Do Likewise" Luke 10:25-37

Saturday: Lost! Luke 15:1-10

Sunday: "Teach Us to Pray" Luke 11:1-13

## Prayers for the Week

### *A Boy's Prayer*

Over seven hundred years ago Richard of Chichester (1197-1253) wrote a prayer which boys and girls are still praying. Make it your daily prayer this week.

Day by day,  
Dear Lord, of Thee three things I pray:  
To see Thee more clearly,  
Love Thee more dearly,  
Follow Thee more nearly,  
Day by day.

### *A Child's Prayer for Forgiveness*

Dear Father, when I think of Jesus—  
His kindness to those in need,  
The happy stories that he told,  
The crowds he had to feed—

I feel sorry when I think  
Of the unkind things I've done;  
Help me, dear God, to be like Him,  
Friendly to everyone. Amen.

### *A Parent's Prayer for Pardon*

Dear Master, if you came to our house today, we might not be prepared to receive you! Forgive us for failing to make our home ready. We have been too busy—with unimportant, selfish concerns. Forgive us, Master. We have spoken hastily to our children; the sharp quick tone of our voices has revealed to thee and to the little ones whom we love our impatience, our fretting worry, our lack of trust in your goodness. We hear your voice saying to us as you said to parents long ago, "O you who have so little faith!" Pardon, our Master, our unbelief.

Forgive us when we have made promises to our children—and then have neglected to keep them because they seemed trivial and unimportant. Forgive us when we have allowed one of your little ones to stumble by our neglect of his needs for steadfast love and care.

Our Father, we come to you as an erring child turns to his father and mother. Forgive us as we forgive the mistakes of our little ones. Shelter and bless us as we try to bless them. May we take time for the little kindnesses that smooth out the tangles of everyday living.

Give us the grace to look at your world through the clear eyes of a child. Let us sense anew the wonder of your creation. Help us create a springtime climate in our home in which the loving ways of Jesus can grow. In his name we pray. Amen.

### *Thinking About the Lord's Prayer*

FATHER: The followers of Jesus often wondered about his strength in

the face of hard tasks; his loving concern for everyone who needed him; his teachings that were true and bold, yet loving and kind; his daily life that showed them what God was like. They knew that one of the secrets of his power was prayer. They wanted to be strong, fearless, and loving too. So one day they said to him, "Master, teach us to pray." Jesus answered them by praying the prayer we call the Lord's Prayer. It is a pattern of what a worthy prayer should be. Let us think about it.

MOTHER: Our Father

FATHER: Jesus called God "Father," for he wanted to remind men of God's loving concern for them. He said, not "My Father," but "Our Father." God is the father of all men, and they are brothers of one another.

MOTHER: Who art in heaven,

FATHER: Jesus taught us to compare God with the best we know, and then to realize that God is greater than our words can describe.

MOTHER: Hallowed be thy name.

FATHER: What does it mean to feel reverent when we think of God? It means the wonder we sense when we look at a sunset sky or at a hundred snow crystals on a winter day, and realize that God has given each one a pattern all its own. It means the happy stillness we feel in a quiet church. It means the love we feel when we think of the thoughtful care of our parents. We "hallow" his name when our thoughts of him are high, and we earnestly try to live his way.

MOTHER: Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

FATHER: Jesus helped men see what life would be like when all men learn to live as loving children of God. We ought to pray each day, "Thy kingdom come—beginning in me; thy will be done—especially by me."

MOTHER: Give us this day our daily bread;

FATHER: The men who listened to Jesus knew what it meant to be hungry. Jesus realized that they could not think of God's way of right living when their minds were full of worry about food. He taught them to pray for food, but he said, "Do not worry about food and clothes. God, who is your Father, knows that you need those things."

MOTHER: And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

FATHER: Jesus helped men understand what God expects of them. He expects us to right the wrongs we do, and he expects us to give up any feelings of resentment when someone wrongs us. Only if we forgive those who wrong us is God able to forgive the wrongs we have done to others.

MOTHER: And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil.

FATHER: The prayer does not mean that God leads us into evil. It means that if we are tried by evil or attracted to something wrong, we can seek God's guidance in making the right choices.

MOTHER: For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever.

FATHER: This is the chorus of a great song of praise which David, the Hebrew king, once sang. God's reign or rule can come in all its power and glory when men rightly learn to pray and live Christ's prayer. Let us pray it together.<sup>2</sup>

### A Verse for Little Children

I like to think of Jesus  
So loving, kind, and true

<sup>2</sup> Gebhard, *op. cit.*, 142-143.



That when he walked among his friends,  
His friends were loving too.

I like to think of Jesus  
With children on his knee;  
And hear his gentle words again,  
"Let children come to me."

I like to think of Jesus  
So loving, kind, and true  
That somehow when I think of him  
It makes me loving, too.<sup>3</sup>

### A Hymn for the Week

O young and fearless Prophet of ancient Galilee:  
Thy life is still a summons to serve humanity,  
To make our thoughts and actions less prone to please the crowd,  
To stand with humble courage for Truth with hearts uncowed.

We marvel at the purpose that held Thee to Thy course  
While ever on the hilltop before Thee loomed the cross;  
Thy steadfast face set forward where love and duty shone,  
While we betray so quickly and leave Thee there alone.

Create in us the splendor that dawns when hearts are kind,  
That knows not race nor station as boundaries of the mind;  
That learns to value beauty, in heart, or brain, or soul,  
And longs to bind God's children into one perfect whole.

O young and fearless Prophet, we need Thy presence here,  
Amid our pride and glory to see Thy face appear;

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth McE. Shields. Copyright, 1935, by Presbyterian Board of Christian Education: from *Songs for Early Childhood*; used by permission.

Once more to hear Thy challenge above our noisy day,  
Again to lead us forward along God's holy way.<sup>4</sup>

## What We Can Do This Week

### *Play the Stories Jesus Told*

Have you ever lost something you wanted very much? Who hasn't? The woman in the story Jesus told lost something very precious to her, for it was her jewelry as well as her money. Think how hard she must have searched for it! In every dark corner, under the rugs, behind the chest! Finally she took the broom and swept the floor. At last she found the precious coin. She was so happy she called to her friends and had a party! Who will be the woman? The others can be the neighbors who came to help her celebrate.

Or who will be the little lost sheep? All the other sheep are counted and safe. Can the Good Shepherd find the little lost one? Play the story and see!

### *Watch a Bean Grow*

Or plant an acorn, an orange or grapefruit seed! One of the best ways to discover the wonderful power that God has put in a seed, which looks lifeless and useless to us, is to watch a bean grow.

Line a glass jar with blotting paper. Between the blotting paper and the glass side of the jar, place several beans. Then put about an inch of water in the bottom of the glass. Set the jar in a sunny window if you want a bushy plant or in a dark corner if you want a real climber. In two or three days the little white rootlets will be pushing downward looking for moisture, and the first tiny leaves will stretch toward the light. Baby roots and tiny leaves—all are hidden inside the hard, dried, dead-looking bean!

One family on an early springtime walk found some acorns that had

<sup>4</sup> S. Ralph Harlow, "O Young and Fearless Prophet." Used by permission.

split open to let the white rootlets out. They filled their drinking cups with the sprouting acorns and took them home. They wanted to see what would happen. In a pot of soil each person planted his acorn. In a few days the leaves began to unfold, too. What fun it was to see whose acorn grew the fastest!

Or, plant a grapefruit or an orange seed. In a few weeks it will grow into a bushy plant and make an attractive centerpiece for your breakfast table.



## IV JESUS, THE COMFORTING FRIEND

[Jesus] went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

—Acts 10:38b

We would see Jesus, in His work of healing,  
At eventide before the sun was set;  
Divine and human, in His deep revealing,  
Of God and man in loving service met.<sup>1</sup>

### Scripture for Family Reading

IF WE HAD A FRIEND LIKE JESUS, WE WOULD GO TO HIM WHEN we felt troubled or unhappy. We would tell him when we felt sorry about wrongs we had done. If we were sick, we would ask him to make us well again.

<sup>1</sup> By J. Edgar Park, from *New Worship and Song*. The Pilgrim Press.

Wherever Jesus went, people brought their troubles to him. Often he made them well and strong again. Often he told them to live in ways pleasing to God, and they would be well and happy.

Jesus still heals those who want to live clean, wholesome lives; those who trust completely in God's goodness, power, and love; and those who earnestly want wholeness of body, mind, and spirit. To some he gives strength to endure their sufferings with patience and comfort. He still tells us to keep right attitudes toward God and fellow men if we want to be happy.

Monday: "And He Healed Many" Mark 1:29-34

Tuesday: "Of Such Is the Kingdom of God" Luke 18:15-17

Wednesday: "Thy Sins Be Forgiven" Matthew 9:2-8

Thursday: The Least and the Greatest Luke 9:46-48

Friday: "He Had Great Possessions" Mark 10:17-31

Saturday: The Test of Faith Matthew 8:5-13

Sunday: Barley Loaves and Fishes John 6:1-15

### Prayer for the Week

Francis of Assisi, one of the most beloved of the medieval saints, like the rich young ruler who came to Jesus, looked for the answer to the question, "What must I do?" Only young Francis, unlike the rich young man, gave up his wealth, his gay companions, his social position, and tried to live the teachings of Jesus completely. One of his prayers tells us how he sought to live Jesus' way. As we pray it and try to live by it, we, too, are helped to walk the way that Jesus went.

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace;  
Where there is hatred, let us sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is discord, union;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;



Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy.

Divine Master, grant that we may not so much  
    seek to be consoled as to console,  
To be understood as to understand,  
To be loved as to love;  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

### A Song for the Week

Some songs are prayers set to music. Here is a children's prayer that may be sung to the hymn tune, "Serenity." (Another hymn sung to this tune is "We May Not Climb the Heavenly Steeps.")

O Master of the loving heart,  
    The Friend of all in need,  
We pray that we may be like thee,  
    In thought and word and deed.

Thy days were full of kingly acts,  
    Thy speech was true and plain;  
And no one ever sought thee, Lord,  
    Who came to thee in vain.

Thy face was warm with sympathy,  
    Thy hand God's strength revealed.  
Who saw thy face, or felt thy touch,  
    Were comforted and healed.

O grant us hearts like thine, dear Lord,  
    So joyous, true, and free,

That all thy children everywhere  
Be drawn by us to thee.<sup>2</sup>

## What We Can Do This Week

### *Plant a Garden in an Eggshell!*

The grass on the lawn and in the park is beginning to turn green! It's nearly time to plant flower seeds for transplanting later in the outdoor garden.

The tiniest garden one can grow is a garden in an eggshell! Take half an eggshell (or several, while you're at it). Fill the half shell with garden soil. Moisten the dirt with a spoonful of water. If you want a quick crop, sprinkle grass seed over the soil. If you want a baby flower plant that you can put in your garden later, press a couple of marigold seeds, or petunia seeds, or a morning glory seed into the soil. Set your little garden in a sunny window and watch it grow! If you have no egg cup to hold the shell, make a holder from an empty egg carton.

Little seeds so small and round,  
We will plant you in the ground;  
We will watch you grow up tall,  
With leaves and blossoms, stems, and all.<sup>3</sup>

Act out verse with finger plays.

### *Tray Favors for a Sick Friend*

Days grow long when one is sick. A gay tray favor on one's lunch tray brings a smile to someone who is ill. Why not make a little gum-

<sup>2</sup> Calvin W. Laufer, "O Master of the Loving Heart." Copyright, 1927, by C. W. Laufer; copyright renewed, 1955, by E. B. Laufer; from *Hymns for Junior Worship*; used by permission.

<sup>3</sup> Copyright © 1950 by Satis N. Coleman and Ruth Carroll. Reprinted from *The New Singing Time* by Satis N. Coleman by permission of The John Day Company, Inc., publisher.

drop tree bloom? Put a small, bushy twig with many sharp, short branches (thornbush or pawpaw is perfect!) in a paper drinking cup filled with sand or colored stones (or even sugar would do!). On the tip of every branch put a spicy gum drop. A tree with candy blossoms!

## Ancient Customs That Live Today

### *"Little Arms" for Lent*

Little arms crossed in prayer (pretzels to us moderns!) were first made by the Roman Christians hundreds of years ago out of flour, salt, and water as a food to be eaten on fast days. They were called *bracellae* (little arms). Germans call them *Brezeln*, from which the word pretzel has come. In Luxembourg the fourth Sunday of Lent is Pretzel Sunday (Bretzelsonnidig) and on this day elaborately decorated pretzels are exchanged by friends and sweethearts. Only in our own century have pretzels become a familiar round-the-year tidbit.

### *Mothering Sunday*

The fourth Sunday in Lent has a homey sound some places. Sometimes we think of Mother's Day (which we observe on the second Sunday in May) as a special American holiday. But in Great Britain and several European countries the fourth Sunday of Lent is called "Mothering Sunday," a day to honor mother as queen of the home. In England those who work, go to school, or live away from home make a special effort to get home on Mothering Sunday. And they bring with them flowers or simnel cakes, a traditional cookie flavored with spice and filled with currants. On Mothering Sunday, the family goes to church together and sits together in the family pew. Then after church they have dinner of roast lamb or veal with all the trimmings, a welcome break for those who keep the Lenten fast. Guess who does the dishes!



## V JESUS, SAVIOUR AND LORD

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

—Matt.16:16

We would see Jesus; in the early morning  
Still as of old He calleth, "Follow me";  
Let us arise, all meaner service scorning:  
Lord, we are Thine, we give ourselves to Thee.<sup>1</sup>

### Scripture for Family Reading

WHEREVER JESUS WENT, THE CROWDS FOLLOWED HIM. THEY listened to his teachings. They brought their sick and troubled to him. Sometimes they clamored to make him king. But they did not under-

<sup>1</sup> By J. Edgar Park, from *New Worship and Song*. The Pilgrim Press.



stand why God had sent Jesus into the world. On the edge of every crowd were the critical whispering Pharisees and Sadducees, finding fault in his words and actions because he didn't teach their strict and often petty laws. They did not like what they heard and saw; they were jealous of his popularity with the crowds, for Jesus spoke with authority and acted with a power that challenged their rigid forms and rules.

Often Jesus slipped away from the crowds for quiet times of prayer and fellowship with his disciples. They realized that Jesus was different from other leaders. They saw God in him. "Thou art the Christ," Peter confessed for all of them. "We will follow you wherever you go."

Monday: "Follow Me" Matt. 9:9-13

Tuesday "I Must Abide at Thy House" Luke 19:1-10

Wednesday: "In Spirit and in Truth" John 4:4-26

Thursday: "The Least of These My Brethren" Matt. 25:31-40

Friday: "To Jerusalem" Matt. 20:17-29

Saturday: "Have Mercy on Me" Luke 18:35-43

Sunday: The Entrance of a King Matt. 21:1-11

## What We Can Do This Week

### *Fruit Blossoms Ahead of Time!*

Do you have an apple tree (or some other fruit tree or flowering bush—forsythia, flowering almond, redbud) in your yard? Or perhaps you know where the wild plum grows! When the winter buds loosen and the baby leaves begin to unfold, cut a few twigs well up on the tree or bush and take them into the house. Arrange the twigs in a vase or jar filled with warm water (a little plant food too will help, though it is not necessary). Sunshine and the warmth of your house may fool the twigs into thinking spring has arrived and force them to bloom ahead of time!



### *An Eggshell Tree for a Centerpiece*

Sometimes Easter comes even before the crocuses show their brave purple and golden blossoms. Why not make a colorful “eggshell” tree for a Lenten centerpiece?

The next time Mother serves eggs, ask her to crack the shells carefully through the center. Color the half shells with Easter egg dyes. Then string a pretty button on a double thread. With a sharp needle, puncture the inside of the egg pulling the thread through to the outside of the egg. (The button will act like a giant knot to keep the thread from slipping through the hole.) Next find a branchy twig and plant it in a vase of gravel or stones. Tie the half shells to the branches of the twig. Doesn’t your egg-shell bush look like a tree with giant spring blossoms?

### **Prayer for the Week**

*We Want to Follow You, Jesus*

(A responsive prayer)

We want to follow you, Jesus:

We remember how you called simple men and women—fishermen and housewives—to follow you, and how little children ran along after you to listen to your stories.

We want to follow you, Jesus:

We think of the stories you told about everyday things like seeds and yeast and a lost lamb and how to be a good neighbor. We remember the wise, good things you said to troubled people. We want to live by the truths you taught and by the way you lived them.

We want to follow you, Jesus:

We recall how the sick and unhappy folk came to you, seeking strength for their bodies and healing for their hearts and minds.

When the hungry people stayed with you, you used the lunch of a little boy to feed them.

We want to follow you, Jesus:

Then we remember how you taught men to pray to God as they would speak to an understanding Father, how you taught them to forgive each other if they wanted God to forgive them. Teach us to pray too, Jesus, with our hearts as well as with our lips the prayer you taught men to pray—(Repeat the Lord's Prayer.)

### *A Prayer Response*

(To sing or say)

Lord, I want to be a Christian in-a my heart,  
in-a my heart;  
Lord, I want to be a Christian in-a my heart.

*Refrain:* In-a my heart,  
In-a my heart,  
Lord, I want to be a Christian in-a my heart.

Lord, I want to be more loving in-a my heart,  
in-a my heart;  
Lord, I want to be more loving in-a my heart.

### *Refrain*

Lord, I want to be like Jesus in-a my heart,  
in-a my heart;  
Lord, I want to be like Jesus in-a my heart.

### *Refrain*

Lord, I want to be more holy in-a my heart,  
in-a my heart;  
Lord, I want to be more holy in-a my heart.

### *Refrain*

—Negro Spiritual

## A Song for the Week

If you could stand at Jesus' side, sit on his knee, or talk to him by the lakeside, what stories would you ask him to tell you? Do you find your favorite story mentioned in this song? If you do not, why doesn't your family write a verse to the song about the stories you would ask Jesus to tell you?

### *Tell Me the Stories of Jesus*

Tell me the stories of Jesus  
I love to hear;  
Things I would ask Him to tell me  
If He were here:  
Scenes by the wayside,  
Tales of the sea,  
Stories of Jesus,  
Tell them to me.

First let me hear how the children  
Stood round His knee,  
And I shall fancy His blessing  
Resting on me;  
Words full of kindness,  
Deeds full of grace,  
All in the love-light  
Of Jesus' face.

Into the city I'd follow  
The children's band,  
Waving a branch of the palm tree  
High in my hand;  
One of His heralds,  
Yes, I would sing  
Loudest hosannas,  
Jesus is King! <sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> William H. Parker, "Tell Me the Stories of Jesus" (London: National Sunday School Union). Used by permission.



## VI JESUS, THE SUFFERING CHRIST

We marvel at the purpose that held Thee to Thy course,  
While ever on the hilltop before Thee loomed the cross;  
Thy steadfast face set forward where love and duty shone,  
While we betray so quickly and leave Thee there alone.<sup>1</sup>

### Scripture for Family Reading

THE FOUR GOSPELS, MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, AND JOHN, GIVE more detailed accounts of the final week of Jesus' life than of any other period of his ministry. From the emphasis which the gospel writers placed upon Christ's passion and death, as well as from the frequent and dramatic references to the events of the last week of his life made by Paul in his epistles, we can appreciate the significance of Holy Week. No wonder the church through the centuries has kept with solemn

<sup>1</sup> S. Ralph Harlow, "O Young and Fearless Prophet." Used by permission.



services the final happenings of Jesus' earthly life. The tenderest and most sacred experiences of Jesus climax this week: his triumphal entry into the valley of suffering, his mourning over the hard-hearted city that slayed its prophets, his dramatic cleansing of the temple that he might heal and teach in its courts, his decisive and courageous counters with the Pharisees and Sadducees, the tender hours of his last supper with his disciples, his agonized prayers in the garden of Gethsemane, the unjust trials, the incensed mobs, the denial and desertion of his friends, the cruel crucifixion, his own forgiving and comforting spirit despite the suffering, the dark hours in the tomb.

Every Holy Week, Christians relive the sacred events and feel their own lives cleansed by his sufferings. Only as we enter by sharpened imagination into the experience of the Master can we know the intense joy of the Easter day.

In families where there are small children, choose a Bible story book from the list on p. 17 to help you interpret the final days of Jesus' life in a way meaningful to children.

Monday: A House of Prayer Matt. 21:12-16

Tuesday: Give unto God Mark 12:13-17

Wednesday: "More Than They All" Luke 21:1-4

Thursday: The Supper of the Lord Matt. 26:17-30

Friday: Prayer in the Garden Mark 14:32-42

Saturday: From the Cross Luke 23:33-47

### **Ancient Customs That Live Today**

#### ***Palm Branches and Processionals for Palm Sunday***

One of the great historical celebrations of the liturgical churches since the earliest Christian Era has been re-enacting the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem with processionals of singing choirs and palm branches. One ancient hymn has been sung for a thousand years in Palm Sunday processionals. It is still a favorite today.



All glory, laud, and honor,  
To Thee, Redeemer, King,  
To whom the lips of children  
Made sweet hosannas ring.  
Thou art the King of Israel,  
Thou David's royal Son,  
Who in the Lord's name comest,  
The King and Blessed One.

The company of angels  
Are praising Thee on high,  
And mortal men and all things  
Created make reply.  
The people of the Hebrews  
With palms before Thee went;  
Our praise and prayer and anthems  
Before Thee we present.

To Thee before Thy Passion  
They sang their hymns of praise;  
To Thee now high exalted,  
Our melody we raise.  
Thou didst accept their praises;  
Accept the praise we bring,  
Who in all good delightest,  
Thou good and gracious King.

—Theodulph of Orleans, ?-821  
Tr. by John M. Neale, 1818-1866

### *Holy Week Services*

Special services in the church have long marked the days of Holy Week. Often today, union noontide services are held in downtown churches or theaters so that those who work in the heart of great cities may attend. Most solemn of these memorial services is the traditional three-hour service on Good Friday, extending usually from twelve until three o'clock, in remembrance of the hours that Jesus hung upon the

cross. Often the meditations for these services are based on the "seven last words" which Jesus spoke from the cross.

### *The Seven Last Words*

The four stories of the crucifixion recorded in the gospels are not exactly alike, but when the stories are put together, seven statements which Jesus spoke from the cross are given. They are known as the seven last words. None of the gospels contains all of them, but each record gives some of them. The seven last words are: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34.) "Verily, I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43.) "Woman, behold thy son! . . . Behold thy mother!" (John 19:26, 27.) "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46.) "I thirst." (John 19:28.) "It is finished." (John 19:30.) "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." (Luke 23:46.)

### *Maundy Thursday*

On Thursday evening of Holy Week, it is thought that Jesus had his last supper with his disciples. It was a reflective and tender hour of fellowship when Jesus shared some of his greatest insights with them. In many churches the holy communion service on Thursday evening is held in memory of Jesus' last supper. Sometimes the day is called Maundy Thursday, from the Latin word, *mandatum*, which means mandate, and refers to the "new commandment" that Jesus gave his followers, "that ye love one another."

### *Good Friday*

Why is the day on which Jesus was unjustly tried, sentenced, and cruelly crucified called "Good Friday"? At one time the day was known as Holy Friday, and still earlier it may have been called God's Friday. It is called Good Friday because Christ through his death showed mankind the greatest good in a way that men could never forget. Whatever the day is called, the good for which Jesus lived and died seems very real to everyone on that day.

### *Marble Playing and Rope Jumping on Good Friday*

Many quaint customs have clustered around the days of Holy Week. Some churches, for instance, on Maundy Thursday act out the washing of the disciples' feet at the last supper. In other places unusual traditions help the people recall the events of Good Friday.

In the villages of Sussex in England, for instance, the men and boys play marbles before and after the Good Friday services in the church yard. Stooping down to cast the marbles reminds the people of the way the Roman soldiers gambled for the seamless robe of Jesus while he hung on the cross.

In the fishing villages of Brighton, the fisherfolk use their fishing ropes to jump rope on Good Friday. This old custom makes them feel a kinship, it is said, with the fishermen who were disciples of Jesus.

### **A Song for the Week**

None of the familiar passion hymns of the church seems to have caught the tragedy of Jesus' crucifixion better than the simple, yet poignant, question of the Negro spiritual, "Were You There?"

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?  
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?  
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;  
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?  
Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?  
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;  
Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?

Were you there when they pierced Him in the side?  
Were you there when they pierced Him in the side?  
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;  
Were you there when they pierced Him in the side?

Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?  
Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?  
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;  
Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?

—Negro Spiritual



**VII**  
**CHRIST IS ALIVE!**  
**EASTER IS HERE!**

Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.

—Luke 24:5-6.

Joy dawned again on Easter-Day,  
The sun shone out with fairer ray  
When, to their longing eyes restored,  
The Apostles saw their risen Lord.

—Authorship uncertain

Translated by John M. Neale (1818-1866)

CHRIST IS ALIVE! LET LOOSE IN THE WORLD! HE'S STRONGER than death! More powerful than the worst that man can do to him! Nothing can ever take him away from those who love him! And, because he lives, we—his friends and followers who live by the truths he taught, who feel the guiding strength of his spirit—we, too, have eternal life!



This is the living faith that burst upon Jesus' disciples and friends that first Easter morn. Their sorrowing was turned to joy! Their loneliness and indecision gave way to a compelling sense of divine purpose. The will and love of God is indestructible! The values for which Jesus lived and died are eternal! Rejoice!

The stories of the appearances of Jesus after his resurrection differ in the four gospels. He appeared to Mary in the garden, he came to the disciples as they mourned together in the upper room, he met the fishermen at dawn on the shores of Galilee, he walked with two friends on Easter evening and then stayed with them for the breaking of bread. Through all these various experiences, one truth is radiant. Christ is alive, a living presence to those who know and love him!

And it's still true! Easter is the supreme holy day of the Christian year because we celebrate—not something worth remembering that happened nearly two thousand years ago—but something that's happening *now*. Christ is alive! His living presence can fill our days and nights, even our shadowed hours. We, his friends today, need never be without his companionship. Rejoice!

Easter Sunday: "Master." John 20:1-23

Easter Monday: "Abide With Us" Luke 24:13-35

### **A Prayer for the Presence of Jesus**

O Christ, we have walked the road to Easter together. And along the way, we have been aware of thy presence. In thy teachings we have seen thy winsome, gracious spirit. We have discovered thy power to forgive our failings and to make us whole and new. We want to show the love to our neighbors that thou hast shown to us.

Thou art alive, O Christ. Everywhere we turn we see evidences of your living presence: in the lives of the good people whom we know, in our times of struggle and sorrow when we have sensed your comforting

strength, when together we have prayed earnestly for wisdom greater than our own.

Be a welcome guest in our home, a continual comfort, our ever-present friend. Sensing thy gracious presence, we pray. Amen.

## What We Can Do for Easter

### *Coloring Easter Eggs*

Few things look more lifeless on the outside than an egg; yet it is the container of new life. For centuries many customs and traditions which we still keep today have clustered about the Easter egg. In central Europe the eggs are blown out of the shell and the empty shells are elaborately painted. Traditional designs of peasant art have been preserved by families. In some countries the decorated Easter eggs are still exchanged as special symbols of affection between friends and lovers.

To blow out an egg, puncture both ends of the egg with a darning needle. Blow gently but steadily through one hole, and the yolk and white will slip out of the other end. Now the egg is ready for painting.

An attractive way for children to decorate eggs is by using tiny gummed stickers and stars. (They can be purchased from the dime or stationers store.)

By far the most popular way of decorating eggs is by dyeing them with vegetable dyes. Before the days of packaged dyes, housewives found other ways to color the eggs. Wrap an egg in the outer skin of an onion before you boil it and it becomes a mottled brown. When eggs are boiled with certain flowers, leaves, dogwood chips, or cochineal they take on other colors. The packaged vegetable dyes make a basket of Easter eggs as gay as the colors of a spring garden.

### *An Easter-Egg Hunt and Easter-Egg Rolling*

Does Easter dawn mean Easter-egg hunting at your house? In many homes it does. And whether the search is outdoors on spring lawns or in

apartment living rooms, the joy of finding the gaily colored eggs delights every child. If you have an Easter-egg-hunting contest, you may want to impose handicaps on the other children in order to give the little ones a fair chance too.

One of the famous American customs is the Easter-egg-rolling contest on the White House lawn in Washington, D.C. Dolly Madison started this custom when James Madison was president of the United States. Ever since, the White House lawn on Easter Sunday morning has belonged to children for Easter-egg hunting and egg rolling. (The trick is to try to keep your egg from getting broken!)

### *An Easter Basket You Can Eat for Breakfast!*

Why not provide edible Easter baskets—as nutritious as pretty—for your family? You will need a cereal bowl for each basket and a glass that will fit inside the bowl. The ingredients for the basket are one package of bite-sized shredded rice biscuits, a half pound of marshmallows (about thirty), one third cup of butter or margarine with an additional amount for buttering the utensils.

Butter generously a four-quart bowl and eight cereal bowls. Put the shredded biscuits in the large bowl. Heat together over boiling water one third cup of butter and the marshmallows. When the marshmallows are melted, blend the butter into them by stirring and remove the mixture from the heat. Pour the melted marshmallows evenly over the cereal, mixing with a large spoon until all the pieces of cereal are coated. Let stand for a few minutes to cool so it will be less sticky to handle. Now fill each buttered bowl three-quarters full with the cereal mixture. Do not pack. Butter the outside bottom of the glass. Using a twisting motion, press the glass into the cereal mixture in the first bowl. Butter your fingers and gently shape the cereal around the sides of the glass. Then carefully remove the glass. Butter the glass before making each nest. If you let the nests stand overnight they will become firm. With a small knife you can loosen them from the bowls. Fill the nests with Easter eggs for an after breakfast or Easter dinner treat.

## *Easter Sunrise Services*

Easter sunrise services of devotion and beauty are as near every family as the radio or television set, for the traditional services held in scenic shrines across the nation with thousands of worshipers participating are broadcast and telecast throughout the early Easter morning hours by major networks. But the family that goes to the sunrise services in its own church or community is specially blessed by the joy of Easter morning.

### *Christ's Holy Morn*

"All things made new in time for Spring!"

Carolling choirs for Easter sing.

"New is the day at rising sun,"

Whisper the winds of God,

"New life's begun!"

Sing a new hymn for Eastertide,

Live as the streams from mountainside:

"Like tree and flower, God made us new,

Growing as Jesus grew

Lovely and true." <sup>1</sup>

## **Ancient Customs That Live Today**

### *Easter*

Easter, the happiest of all Christian holidays, is called by the name of the pagan goddess Eastre, the goddess of spring. Easter celebrations in pre-Christian times were the most joyous of all the year. The early Christians, rather than forbid the old holiday, saw a chance to transform it with the spirit of Christ, for it fell at the time when they remembered the resurrection of Christ from the tomb. Also, in the return of spring,

<sup>1</sup> Edith Lovell Thomas, "Christ's Holy Morn" (Philadelphia: Westminster Press). Used by permission of author.

they saw the creative power of God, the creator and ruler of all, and they saw also the new life that comes through Christ.

Easter was the first of the Christian holy days. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he said, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast" (I Cor. 5:7-8). The date for Easter was set in the Christian calendar by the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 "on the first Sunday after the date of the first full moon occurring on or after March 21st." Easter always falls between March 21st and April 25th.

### *The Empty Cross*

One of the most cherished symbols of the Protestant church is the Easter cross—an empty cross, not a crucifix, for we worship the risen Christ who has conquered death and the evil of the world. For many, the center beam of the cross stands for man's reach upward toward God, while the crossarms remind them of the outreaching concern the Christian feels for all men.

### *Easter Eggs—Symbols of Creation*

An ancient Egyptian story of creation relates how the earth was hatched from an egg! Every spring the ancient Egyptians celebrated the world's birthday by exchanging eggs. The Jews also use eggs in their celebration of the Passover.

But to the early Christians the egg reminded them of the resurrection of Christ, and Easter eggs were colored red to remind them of his blood shed on the Cross. Russian Christians give beautifully decorated eggs as gifts to their friends with the joyous greeting, "He is risen!" "He is risen indeed!" the friends reply.

### *The Easter Bunny*

Do you have an Easter bunny that hides under your front porch and hops across the lawn in the early morning? Perhaps he's a drab little fellow with patchy fur, for even bunnies are getting new coats of fur at Easter time.

How did the familiar little rabbit find his place among our Easter



traditions? He's been there a long time! Like the word "Easter" his entrance into the holy season has pagan roots. In ancient Egyptian mythology the hare, a first cousin of our rabbit, was a symbol of the full moon which falls near the Easter date. And the little bunnies in our lawns and gardens remind us of the new life that comes with the spring season.

### *The Easter Parade*

In the Middle Ages, Lent was a drab time of penitence and mourning. Everyone wore dark clothes with no adornments as a sign that they were sorry for the wrongs they had done. Then came Easter Sunday, and all the sadness turned into joy. Dressed in their best clothes, people walked to church. After the service, they took walks through the spring fields.

Sometimes a decorated crucifix was carried at the head of the procession and joyous Easter hymns were sung. Gradually the Easter parades lost their religious purpose and they became the fashion strolls we know today.

### *Your Easter Bonnet*

At Easter let your clothes be new  
Or else be sure you it will rue

warns an old English nursery rhyme. From earliest Christian times the wearing of new apparel on Easter in celebration of the newness of life found in Christ has been a tradition. Until recent times the new year began in April, and it was customary to put on new clothing in order to begin the new year right. The first Easter bonnets were a part of the gay new year festivities and were wreaths of flowers worn by both men and women!

### *The Easter Sunrise*

Does the sun dance on Easter morning? There's an old tradition that says it does. For hundred of years folk have risen early and climbed to high hills to watch the sun rise on Easter morning. So joyous and bright is the early spring day that on the morning that Christ arose from the

tomb, early Christians believed that even the sun danced for gladness. Watching the sun rise through colored glass or smoked glass has long been a happy custom. Perhaps our modern sunrise services, held outdoors at some high place, are a remnant of the ancient sun watching.

### *The Easter Lilies*

The Easter bells ring sweet and clear,  
They tell us that the spring is here;  
And Easter lilies bend and blow,  
For gone is winter's ice and snow.<sup>2</sup>

The trumpet-like blossoms of the stately Easter lily have been a treasured reminder for a hundred years of the purity and beauty of Christ. When he taught the crowds he spoke of the Father's loving care for the "lilies of the field" more beautifully clothed than "Solomon in all his glory." The lilies about which Jesus spoke, however, were probably not the tall regal lilies which we treasure at Easter time, but the little red lilies that grow on the grassy slopes of Galilean hills.

When your Easter lily has finished blooming in your home and the weather has warmed, set it out in a sunny place in your garden. It may bloom again in August, the normal time for regal lilies to bloom.

### **A Hymn for Easter**

Some of the earliest songs of Christians were Easter hymns. They are joyous choruses of praise to Christ, their risen Lord and Saviour. Several of them we still sing today.

But the glad message of Easter is proclaimed in modern hymns as well as ancient ones. Charles Wesley, the great song writer of Methodism, led the Christians of his day in the best-known one. For most of us it

<sup>2</sup> Reprinted from *We Sing Together* by permission. Copyright 1958 by The Graded Press.

wouldn't seem like Easter without the triumphant music of "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today!"

Christ the Lord is risen today,  
Alleluia!  
Sons of men and angels say,  
Alleluia!  
Raise your joys and triumphs high,  
Alleluia!  
Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply,  
Alleluia!

Lives again our glorious King,  
Alleluia!  
Where, O death, is now thy sting?  
Alleluia!  
Once He died, our souls to save,  
Alleluia!  
Where's thy victory, boasting grave?  
Alleluia!

Love's redeeming work is done,  
Alleluia!  
Fought the fight, the battle won,  
Alleluia!  
Death in vain forbids Him rise,  
Alleluia!  
Christ hath opened Paradise,  
Alleluia!

Soar we now where Christ has led,  
Alleluia!  
Following our exalted Head,  
Alleluia!

Made like Him, like Him we rise,  
Alleluia!  
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies,  
Alleluia!

—Charles Wesley, 1707-1788  
and others

### A Living Custom!

#### *The First Day of the Week*

All things are made new at Easter time! Even the calendar is transformed. The first day of the week, the anniversary of Christ's resurrection, becomes the Christian Sunday, our holy day. Each Sunday, a little Easter, a time to celebrate anew the indwelling spirit of Jesus, a time to worship him in the beauty of holiness!

When we rightly keep our Sundays, they will be joyous little Easters. That's what they were to the early Christians. In our homes, too, they can be the happiest, brightest, most holy days of the week. The values which our Sundays lift up can direct and guide and bless the other six days of the week. Thank God for Easter! Thank God for Sunday, the first day of the week!

#### *The Presence of Jesus in Our Home*

Christ is alive! He will stay with us in our homes just as he stayed with the disciples who met him on Easter Day. He himself promised his friends that he would send them a "Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth . . . ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (John 14:16-17.) But we must be ready to receive him. Knowing Christ as a constant companion, guide, and the Lord of life and death is what it means to come to Easter.

O happy home, where Thou art loved the dearest,  
Thou loving Friend, and Saviour of our race,  
And where among the guests there never cometh  
One who can hold such high and honored place!

O happy home, where each one serves Thee, lowly,  
Whatever his appointed work may be,  
Till every common task seems great and holy,  
When it is done, O Lord, as unto Thee!

O happy home, where Thou art not forgotten  
When joy is overflowing, full, and free;  
O happy home, where every wounded spirit  
Is brought, Physician, Comforter, to Thee.

—Carl J. P. Spitta (1801-1859)  
Adapted from translation by  
Sarah B. Findlater (1823-1907)

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